

Section 1

INTRODUCTION

What is WIC?

The Federal Government established the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) as a two-year pilot program in 1972. In 1974, the WIC program achieved permanent program status through Public Law 94-105 as an Amendment to the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. This cost-effective nutrition intervention program is designed to improve the nutritional status of income eligible pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants and children up to the age of five years who are determined medically at risk. WIC is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and was first offered in Arizona in 1974. WIC program services are provided throughout the state by county, tribal health departments and non-profit health agencies.

Within the geographic boundaries of Arizona there are three (3) **separate** USDA funded WIC programs (Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc., Navajo Nation and Arizona WIC Programs). **This Manual relates solely to the Arizona WIC Program.**

Studies have shown that inadequate nutrition and health care represent a threat to the physical and mental well being of certain individuals. Proper nutrition at the beginning of life can help prevent serious health problems. Infants and preschoolers are going through a period of rapid growth, as well as intellectual and social development. Their nutrition status and the health care they receive may have a major impact on their ability to function as happy, healthy children.

WIC has three major components: nutrition education, health services, and supplemental foods. The foods supplied through the WIC program are not intended to serve as a complete diet, but to supplement the foods already being consumed by the participant. Participants are examined by health care professionals to determine the need for supplemental foods and are provided with nutrition guidance. In 1992, the USDA determined that every dollar spent on the prenatal component of WIC saved up to \$4.21 in medical costs for newborns and their mothers and up to \$4.75 for newborns alone.

Participants/authorized representatives receive negotiable food instruments for specific kinds and amounts of nutritious foods. Participants/authorized representatives redeem these food instruments at authorized grocery stores and pharmacies which meet certain criteria and who have signed a Vendor Contract to follow all WIC program rules and regulations.

What Role Does the Vendor Play?

WIC Vendors play an important role in the health community. The WIC food instrument contains a food prescription designed to supplement the WIC participant's nutritional needs. The Vendor fills the prescription, ensuring that the participant receives exactly what is prescribed on the food instrument. Vendors act as the final step in the WIC process. The Vendor's role is vital to the success of the WIC program because the nutritious WIC foods are designed to promote the healthiest possible birth outcomes, as well as the growth and development of children.

The Vendor may also find that the WIC program makes a substantial contribution to overall food sales. The Arizona WIC Program allows participants/authorized representatives to select their choice of Vendors from an authorized Vendor list. Most participants/authorized representatives select a Vendor that provides the remainder of their shopping needs. Current studies show WIC participants/authorized representatives spend an additional 3 to 4 dollars in cash or food stamps for every WIC dollar spent. During Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2004, the Arizona WIC Program served approximately 151,746 participants who redeemed 3,446,570 food instruments worth \$104,927,595.



IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Arizona WIC Program sends out important information that can assist you (Vendors) in maintaining compliance with your Arizona WIC Program Vendor Contract. Therefore, it is essential that you accept/pick up all certified mail sent to you from the Department. Examples of items that may be sent to you via certified mail are replacement food instruments, contract related items (including some WIC Alerts), sanction, lost/stolen food instrument and training notices.

WIC Vendor Criteria

The criteria for the selection of WIC Vendors are found in detail in Appendix 3 of this Manual and are referenced below. An Applicant must meet **all** of the evaluation criteria. Failure to meet any of the criteria provides cause to deny the application.

- Maintain minimum WIC stock requirements
- Competitive price for WIC foods
- Location accessible to WIC participants
- Type of retail establishment
- Sanitation compliance
- WIC and Food Stamp history
- Community acceptance
- Training attendance
- Conflict of Interest
- Volume of WIC business
- Current Food Stamp status
- Business Integrity

Vendor Contract and Authorization

The Department ensures that all participating Vendors enter into a written Contract. The Vendor Contract must be signed by a representative who has legal authority to obligate the Vendor. The Vendor contract and this Manual explain the rights and responsibilities of the Vendor and the Arizona WIC Program. Neither the Vendor Contract nor this Manual constitutes a license or a property interest.

The term of the Vendor Contract is for three (3) federal fiscal years or portion thereof, beginning on October 1 and ending on September 30. Neither the Department nor the Vendor has an obligation to renew the Vendor Contract.

The purpose of the Contract and this Manual is to provide retail outlets for WIC participants and to provide guidelines for both the Vendor and the Department in transactions arising out of the Contract. It will be the responsibility of the Vendor to designate a person from each outlet who will be responsible to ensure Vendor compliance with the terms of the Contract and this Manual. You or your designated representative will also be responsible to accept in-store training; to provide training to all cashiers and other employees who handle WIC transactions; and to provide special or additional training to employees at the request of either the Department or local agency. The Vendor will be held accountable for the actions or inactions of its employees.

The WIC Decal

The purpose of the “We Accept Arizona WIC Food Instruments” decal is to allow WIC participants/authorized representatives to identify your store as an authorized Arizona WIC Program Vendor. The decal is available in English and Spanish and must be posted in a location that is visible to participants/authorized representatives. The Department will provide, at a minimum, one (1) English and one (1) Spanish decal at the beginning of each Contract period. An additional supply may be requested by completing and submitting the Arizona WIC Program Vendor Order Form found in Appendix 2. An example of the English Version of the “We Accept Arizona WIC Food Instruments” decal is shown below.



Note: Available in Spanish